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CORRESPONDENCE FROM THE BRITISH ARCHIVES
CONCERNING TEXAS, 1837-1846

EDITED BY EPHRAIM DOUGLASS ADAMS

III

ABERDEEN TO ELLIOT¹

No 17.

Foreign Office
November 3d. 1842.

Sir,

With reference to my Despatch No 15 of the 3d. ultimo upon the subject of the Relations between Mexico and Texas, I inclose to you, for your information Copies of a communication which I have received from Mr Ashbel Smith, and of a correspondence which I have held with Her Majesty's Ambassador at Paris, having reference to that subject.²

Aberdeen.

Captain Elliot. R. N.

¹F. O., Texas, Vol. 18.

²This correspondence treats of the project of joint mediation between Mexico and Texas, by England, France, and the United States. Aberdeen declined to join in this, stating England's preference to act alone. The enclosures were:

(1) Smith to Aberdeen, August 19, 1842. (In Garrison, *Diplomatic Correspondence of the Republic of Texas*, III, 1011, in Am. Hist. Assoc. Report, 1908, II,—but the date there given is "August 15 (?)." In this was enclosed copy of Smith to Guizot, August 15, 1842. (In *Idem.*, III, 1387.)

(2) Aberdeen to Cowley, No. 147, October 15, 1842. Aberdeen here stated that England, carrying out the plan of her treaties with Texas, had already offered mediation, but had met with no encouragement, and that since Mexico was at the moment angry at an alleged violation of neutrality by the United States, more might probably be accomplished by similar individual action, than by joint action. He enclosed to Cowley correspondence to show that there was little present prospect of Mexican acquiescence in the proposed mediation. These letters were: Aberdeen to Pakenham, No. 21, July 1, 1842; and No. 24, July 15, 1842; Pakenham to Aberdeen, No. 80 (September?), 1842.

(3) Cowley to Aberdeen, No. 349, October 24, 1842. For comment on the proposed tripartite mediation, see Adams, *British Interests and Activities in Texas*, 117-119.

ELLIOT TO ADDINGTON¹

Private.

Galveston. November 15th. 1842

My Dear Sir,

I have to acknowledge and thank you for Your Note of the 3d Ultimo.² The President is General Houston of your acquaintance, and I am sure that your friendly recollection of him will afford him great pleasure. His career during too large an interval between that time and this, has been strange and wild. Defiance of, and expulsion from a branch of the Legislature of which he was a Member, a domestic tempest of desperate violence, and calamitous consequences, habitual drunkenness, a residence of several years amongst the Cherokee Indians, ruling amongst them as a Chieftain, and begetting sons and daughters, a sudden reappearance on this Stage with better hopes and purposes, and commensurate success, but still with unreclaimed habits.

Finally however, a new Connexion with a young and gentle woman brought up in the fear of God; conquered no doubt as women have been from the beginning and will be to the end by a glosing tongue, but in good revenge making conquest of his habits of tremendous cursing, and passionate love of drink. Whatever General Houston has been, it is plain that *He* is the fittest man in this Country for his present station. His education has been imperfect, but he possesses great sagacity and penetration, surprising tact in his management of men trained as men are in these parts, is perfectly pure handed and moved in the main by the inspiring motive of desiring to connect his name with a Nation's rise. Adverting to his general safe and reasonable policy with respect to Mexico, it must certainly be admitted that He sometimes says and writes what appears to be capricious and contradictory.

But the truth is that He knows his own people thoroughly, and when He seems to be running with them, He is probably satisfied

¹F. O., Texas, Vol. 4.

²Not found. Presumably a private letter, but apparently in response Elliot began the series of unofficial letters to Addington, which convey his personal impressions and opinions in regard to Texan matters. He no doubt understood that these letters were to reach the foreign office, and in fact they were filed with the formal, official despatches addressed to Aberdeen.

that opposition would only provoke their precipitate purposes. With hard fare at the point of assembly, skilful delays on the part of the President, and an abundant measure of mutual laudation, the fit passes away innocently enough.—

You desire me to remark that the release of the “Montezuma,” and the disallowance of the Blockade are not to be taken as evidences of ill will to Texas or partiality to Mexico. There will be no difficulty in making the President understand this because his conceptions are founded upon larger notions of direct motives, and straight proceedings than those of most men in this Republic. In regard to the public, the case is different. The suspiciousness of the United States races, and absurd imputation of the policy and conduct of our Government to recondite Motives, and perfidious purposes, afford unhappily the most convincing and distressing proof of their own twistiness and unfriendly feeling. They cannot believe in open or fair dealing, because, speaking generally, they are without the ideas or impulses which makes such conduct intelligible. The consequence of this moral and blundering blindness is manifesting itself just now amongst the good folks of Texas in a pretty general belief that Her Majesty’s Government are sitting early and late in London, debating to and fro, how to compass the strangulation of this young Hercules, and it is probable that we shall have some songs to that tune during the approaching Session of Congress.

Driven away by some of those springs of local politics, feuds and jealousies, which run into such long streams of talk and knavis[h]ness, on this side of the Atlantic, and are so insignificant and unintelligible every where else, the President has convened Congress to assemble at Washington on the Brazos, where there are 12 or 13 Wooden shanties, and to which place there are no means of getting except in an ox train, or on a Bât horse. My worthy American Colleague Mr. Eve, who is suffering from indisposition, has requested me to wait till He is well enough to accompany me, for the sake of Company, and better protection against Indians, or Mexicans, or wild beasts, and we are then to set forth to this Legislature in the Provinces with such appointments to do Honor to our respective Countries, as may find place in two pair of Saddle Bags.—The President writes to me in a private Note a few days since, that He finds things at Washington rather raw

and as He has been accustomed to the elaborate comforts and luxuries of an Indian Wigwam, I presume he must be living in a commodious excavation.

Meditating on the situation and prospect of this Country, and other interests connected with it, I cannot help lamenting more and more that free labor has not been its foundation Stone. The advantages to the Country itself would have been vast indeed, not merely on the results springing from Men's sense that they were laboring for their own and their Childrens' advantage, not merely in beginning upon sound, instead of rotten principles, not merely in drawing to the land much larger proportions of the orderly and enterprising settlers from the free States of the American Union rather than the reckless people of the South, but because immediately considered it would have left Texas clear of a very dangerous state of circumstances, if the Mexicans do invade the Country, and indeed I cannot but think that to have made Texas a fine State, would have been at once to disarm the hostility of Mexico against it's consolidation, and advancement.

Texas, with a free population would of course have been an object of great dislike and suspicion to the South Western States of America, and therefore an effectual barrier between them and Mexico. And it is manifestly the permanent interest of this Country to cultivate more intimate and friendly relations with the people and things Westward of the Rio Grande, than with those East of the Sabine. If wise Councils could be heard here, I think they point to a course which it may not yet be too late to pursue, and which I do fairly believe would be attended with vast advantages to this Country, to our own substantial concernment, and to the great interests of humanity. My scheme supposes another Convention in this Country. Slavery to be abolished, the entire abolition of political disabilities upon people of Colour, *perfectly free trade* to be declared to be a fundamental principle; the right of voting to depend upon a knowledge of reading and writing, and a pretty high money contribution to the State, with the payment charge to be made in advance, Congress to have power to *lower* the rate from time to time according to the state of the public necessities; stringent legislation against squatting, in the form of a land tax and otherwise, improvements upon the well established

failure and folly of a yearly elected Legislature and other liberality of the rhodomontade school.

It seems to be scarcely doubtful that the Northern and North Eastern part of Mexico, from Tampico on the East Coast, to San Blas on the West, (involving the most important parts of the Country) would soon find it their interest to join a State founded upon such principles, or at all events constrain their own Government with the adoption of an equally liberal scheme of Commercial policy.

Foreign Merchants, foreign Capital, and foreign enterprize and principles would soon find their way into those great and rich regions by peaceful means, and the power of the United States on this Continent would be gradually balanced, and yet without motive for collision; Indeed it seems possible enough that the North Eastern States would not be disturbed to see the power of the South and West effectually limited, and a bound marked, beyond which Slavery could not advance. In all such speculation the question immediately presents itself how it is reasonable to expect that a Legislature of Slave Holders will ever consent to make a present sacrifice for a prospective and remote advantage. I have had much experience of such bodies and I know that they talk violently of holding on to their property to the last gasp, of the lawfulness of the System, of the sanction of it in the Bible, Abraham's Slaves, J. L.¹ and then there are always many hard words about Irish Slaves and press gangs and the like. But in the main, their circumstances make them a timid and needy people, and ready enough to compound reasonably for a monied consideration

Neither do I doubt that a sufficient loan could be readily raised in England to enable this Government to compensate the present Slave Holders, upon the frank and full adoption of such a system as I have spoken of. I attach great importance to the entire abolition of disability upon people of Colour. Such a Stipulation would at once bring into this Republic tens of thousands of most abused and intelligent people from the United States, and would be exceedingly agreeable to a very influential and wealthy party

¹Meaning uncertain. Possibly should be read V. L., meaning *vide locum*; or I. L., meaning *in loco*.

in our own Country. The present conjuncture is particularly favorable for the Commercial part of the scheme, by reason of the late foolish tariff in the United States.¹ Your kind note has enabled me to trouble you with new thoughts, inadequately expressed, and clumsily thrown together, but I beg you to believe not hastily adopted. In a former part of my Official career I had much reason to think upon the subject of Slavery, and to watch it's effects, and I have long since formed the opinion that bad as it is to the enslaved, it is ten times worse to the enslaver, and to the Country in which it obtains. It is a rot at the heart of society, debasing the Master Classes more and more, robbing prosperity of all sense of security, and frightfully aggravating the calamities and the risks of adversity.

I am perfectly sensible that it does not consist with the principles or policy of Her Majesty's Government to interfere with the Institutions of other Countries, and I feel I need scarcely say to you that situated as I am I should guardedly abstain from offering any opinion here upon this Subject. If I were approached upon it, and you are perfectly aware that it is just one of those topics upon which the motives and purposes of H. M. Govern't. are so absurdly misconceived about, I should say, that Her Majesty's Government would of course expect a faithful fulfilment of the Slave treaty with this or any other Country, that the abhorrence of the British Nation to the system of Slavery in The Queen's Dominions, had been manifested before the whole world by a costly sacrifice, but that nothing could be further from the intentions of Her Majesty's Government than to interfere with the Institutions of other Countries. It has occurred to me that it might be useful if Lord Aberdeen would be pleased to give me authority to pay a visit to Mexico on leave of absence, if I saw reason to think that my representations on that question might smooth away some of the difficulty in the adjustment of this mischievous contest, but in making this remark I take the liberty to say that I have no personal wishes upon the subject, and have merely mentioned it because I consider it my duty to declare whatever I think may be of advantage to the public Service. I feel assured that you will accept this declaration literally.

¹The tariff of August, 1842, which raised duties above twenty per cent.

It is the bare truth that personally speaking I am weary of going and coming, and would think it my greatest blessing if I had when [been] invitted to sit down (upon the most modest footing) for the rest of my days very far off from public life or politics of any kind. I hope you will not consider this tedious letter to be an intrusion, that the conjuncture with respect to this Country is so important that I conclude you will be content to hear [more] advice upon the subject, than might be the case, if it had passed through it's troubles.

Charles Elliot.

To H. U. Addington, Esqr. etc.

P. S. If any North American Mails should come to you after the arrival of this one conveying these letters without communications from me, perhaps you will be so good as to ascribe the omission to my absence at Washington. Communications between that place and the Coast are quite uncertain.—May I beg you to offer my best respects to Lord Aberdeen and Lord Canning

Charles Elliot

KENNEDY TO BIDWELL¹

Liverpool, November 16th, 1842.

Sir.

I beg to inform you that I shall embark today at Liverpool for New Orleans, on my way to my post at Galveston.

William Kennedy.

John Bidwell, Esq. etc.

ELLIOT TO ABERDEEN²

Secret.

Galveston November 16th. 1842.

My Lord,

A private letter from the President of which the inclosed is a copy has this moment reached me, and as the Steam Boat is upon the point of sailing to New Orleans, I have no time to offer any observations upon the Subject; but it must be unnecessary to

¹F. O., Texas, Vol. 3.

²F. O., Texas, Vol. 4.

say to Your Lordship that I am prepared for any Service which may be committed to me.

The indisposition of my Colleague Mr. Eve has detained me here at his request till He should be well enough to accompany me to Washington, where however we shall proceed in the course of a day or two.

Affairs remain in the Situation reported in my last despatches.

Charles Elliot.

To the Right Honorable.

The Earl of Aberdeen, K. T. etc.

HOUSTON TO ELLIOT¹

[Enclosure.]

Private.

Washington 5th. November 1842

My Dear Sir.

I am about to present a suggestion to You, and I hope it will claim your indulgent consideration. It is quite novel in it's character and would to one, not perfectly acquainted with my direct way of business, require some apology.

You are aware of my intense anxiety for peace with Mexico. To obtain it I do not care to pursue formal means. I know of no Gentleman, whose agency in my estimation would go farther in the attainment of the object than your own were it possible to obtain your personal Services. Should it be agreeable for you to be so employed I am well aware that the permission of Your Government (of Her Majesty The Queen) will be necessary. This you could do, if you may deem it proper, and the sacrifice is not too great upon your part. I can claim nothing on behalf of My Country or myself individually of Captain Elliot, but I desire to hope everything for Texas.

I had the pleasure to peruse your despatch to the State Department, and regret the bearing which attached to a portion of the protest. It will be rectified forthwith. It was owing as I presume to a misapprehension of the revocation of the Blockade on the part of the Acting Secretary of State, as I feel pretty well

¹F. O., Texas, Vol. 4.

assured, that as the Archives had not arrived, that He could not refer to the Proclamation, and I am not certain, as He had been absent that He had ever seen it; as we had no Mails to the Eastward, where He was at the time it was promulgated.

Nothing conclusive has been heard of the treaty with the Indians, but as usual I hope for the best.

As Congress is called to convene on the 14th Inst. it will afford me great pleasure to see Her Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires. It will be of much importance to Texas if you could be here one or two days previous to the 14th.

Mrs. H. as well as myself have been quite indisposed for some ten or fifteen days, but are now pretty well with a hope of better health.

It will afford me much pleasure to hear from you by Mr. Scott on his return. I have many thanks to render you for past favors.

And beseech you to regard me as faithfully Thine.

Sam. Houston.

The Honble. Charles Elliot. etc.

ELLIOT TO ABERDEEN¹

No. 15.²

Houston. November 24th. 1842.

My Lord.

In reply to Your Lordship's despatch No. 16 of the 18th Ultimo, I have now the honor to transmit the requested information, and I remain.

Charles Elliot.

To the Right Honorable

The Earl of Aberdeen, K. T. etc.

¹F. O., Texas, Vol. 4.

²No. 14, Elliot to Aberdeen, acknowledging receipt of dispatches, is omitted.

Return to the information required in Lord Aberdeen's despatch No. 16 of Oct. 18. 1842 respecting Texian Marine¹

Vessels Names	How rigged	to sail on	Situation	Where built	Time of arrival in Texas, and Names under which they arrived
Austin Wharton Galveston	Ship. Brig. Do.	18 16 Do.	Still at New Orleans. Do. Do. dismantled and un- manned at Galveston Stranded in the late hurricane at Galves- ton	Baltimore Do. Do.	Jany 1840 "Austin of Baltimore" Octr. 1839 "Colorado of Baltimore"
San Bernard.	Schooner	7		Do.	Apl. 1840 "Galveston of Baltimore"
San Antonio	Do.	Do.	Missing, and supposed to be lost in the late hurricane	Do.	Sept. 1839 "Scorpion of Baltimore"
San Jacinto	Do.	Do.	Cast away on "La Arcas" Shoal in 1841	Do.	July 1839 "Asp of Baltimore"
Zavala	Steamer		Water logged at Gal- veston	Philadel- phia	June 1839 "Viper of Baltimore" March 1839.

¹F. O., Texas, Vol. 4.

The whole force came out under American Colours, as Merchant Vessels, bringing freight and Passengers; But with their Armament in their respective holds, completely fitted, and ready to go into their places; Powder, shot, stores, and provisions, for six Months.

With the exception of the Steamer "Zavala" the whole Squadron was supplied by the firm of "Wm. Dawson & Co. of Baltimore"; British Subjects by birth, but I am unable to say whether they have not assumed the privileges of Citizens of the United States.

The Steam Vessel Zavala was supplied by Samuel Hamilton of Charleston

Charles Elliot.

Houston Novr. 24th. 1842.

ABERDEEN TO ELLIOT¹

Draft.

F. O. Decr. 3. 1842.

Captn. Elliot.

No. 19.

Sir,

I have to acquaint You in reply to Your Despatch No. 5 of the 1st of September, addressed to Mr. Addington, that under the circumstances therein stated, H. M's Govt. approve of Your residing usually at Galveston, instead of Austin; And in the present unsettled state of the Country, I leave it to your discretion to reside, according to circumstances, wherever You may consider Your presence most conducive to the Interests intrusted to Your Charge.

ELLIOT TO ABERDEEN²

Private.

Galveston. December 11th, 1842.

My Dear Sir.

Since I had the pleasure of writing to you on the 15th Ultimo, I have been to Washington, but my stay there was shortened by the necessity of returning for advice and care on account of a bad

¹F. O., Texas, Vol. 4. The letter is unsigned.

²F. O., Texas, Vol. 4.

accident which befell me on the way up—The Steam boat in which we were going to Houston struck the ground at night, and the tarpaulin leaven within me moved me to go out, and watch the people heaving her off. A hatch had been carelessly left open, and I stepped down into the hold; a friendly bale of cotton bringing me up with just jerk enough to dislocate a rib.

For the first day or two I did not feel the pain very acutely, and being anxious to see the President, I thought that with fast bracing, and lacing, and gentle riding I might bear the stress of the journey, but I find now that it would have been more prudent to take the Doctor's urgent advice, and abide at Houston. At least 50 Miles of the way was through a quick sandy bog, and rough riding, and a Blanket on the plank (which last retirement I preferred to half Judge his bed!!) have not helped me. However I am one of the best practised men of my time to strange accidents, and hard rubs of all kinds, and I hope to come straight enough again, for all that is come and gone.

I found as I anticipated that the President needed no explanation respecting the release of the "Montezuma" and the disallowance of the blockade. He said he would detail to me what he understood to be the Motives of Her Majesty's Government, and He had certainly perfectly apprehended them. Being upon the topic, He requested me to present his Compliments to Lord Aberdeen, and say that the tone of Mr. Ashbell Smith's correspondence relating to the release of the "Montezuma" had been a Subject of much concern to him. That Gentleman's natural and laudable anxiety for the interests of his Country had rather hurried and misled him, but He owed it to him to state that his subsequent communications to Texas had frankly and fully admitted his own error.¹ The President for his own part knew the British Government never meant any thing else than it said, and never performed less than it promised. He had the most abiding confidence in the Neutral professions, and very friendly dispositions of Her Majesty's Government.

¹No evidence has been found that Smith made such an admission, but Houston did mildly state his disapproval of Smith's vigor in the affair of the *Montezuma* and *Guadalupe* (Terrell to Smith, December 7, 1842. Garrison, *Diplomatic Correspondence of the Republic of Texas*, III, 1057; in *Am. Hist. Assoc. Report*, 1908, II.)

He then took occasion to place in my hand a letter marked "Private and Confidential" from General Hamilton dated at Washington in the United States sometime in the Month of October.¹ That Gentleman stated that He had recently had some Conversation with General Almonte, the Mexican Minister in the United States, upon the subject of the difficulties between Mexico and Texas, and thought He was reasonably disposed, rather than otherwise. General Hamilton concludes with the offer to be useful through that Channel, in any way that the President might suggest. The President wished it to be said to Lord Aberdeen that He entirely disclaimed this interference upon the part of General Hamilton. He [Houston] had direct official relations with this Government, [Great Britain] disposed to be helpful to Texas, and He considered it particularly due to Lord Aberdeen and to himself, to disavow all proceedings of the kind. He would employ no other channels of Communication than Official and responsible, and General Hamilton's proposal was the contrary of suitable or agreeable to him. As nearly as I can remember that was General Houston's express language, and He particularly requested that it should be conveyed to Lord Aberdeen as soon as convenient. I mentioned to him (with reference to his private letter to me forwarded in my Second Despatch to Lord Aberdeen of the 16th Ultimo) that I had sent it to England, and was of course ready for any course Her Majesty's Government might sanction.

He expressed himself very obligingly to me, and said that He had a belief that my visit to Mexico would be productive of advantage to this Country, and further the purposes of Her Majesty's Government. Whilst I was at Washington I spoke both to the President and the Attorney General upon the absolute necessity of adjusting the long delayed claims for the "Eliza Russell" and "Little Pen." They both assured me that the first should be settled as soon as the Governmt. could lay its hand upon a few dollars, which I must know they had not done since my arrival in the Country. With respect to the second, Mr. Terrell shewed me an opinion He had given just before my arrival upon a claim pre-

¹See two letters from Hamilton to Houston, November 6 and 25, 1842, in Garrison, *Diplomatic Correspondence of the Republic of Texas*, I, 638-640; in Am. Hist. Assoc. *Report*, 1907, II.

ferred by the Agents of Mesr. F. Lizardi, and Co., and excused himself and the Secy. of State for not acknowledging my note upon the subject, upon the plea of absence from the Seat of Government, and the removal of the papers from Houston. He did not say so, but I have otherwise reason to believe that they hoped to have been able to settle the claim for the "Eliza Russell" before this, and I presumed that they were averse to write till they could promise payment upon that account.

The case of the "Little Pen" is not free of difficulty, but it will be my duty to communicate upon this Subject Officially by the next opportunity, and therefore I say no more at present. These despatches carry you the President's Message to Congress.¹ He did me the favor to read it to me before it was submitted, and asked me what I thought of his finance scheme. I told him I was a very inadequate judge of such matters, but I must frankly admit that I could not think it would be efficacious. It appeared to me that the Cherokee land was no sufficient basis for the support of the Exchequer Bills in the Market. In the present state of this Country there was no raising funds upon the best improved land in the Republic; with the best titles, and in the least disturbed parts of it and therefore, casting no disparagement upon the Cherokee lands, it certainly seemed to me that their value was of rather too prospective a nature to serve as a solid foundation for an actual paper issue. So far as I could judge from all I had seen, or read, the single course for a Governnt. and Country in the Situation of Texas was to be as economical as possible, to adhere with unflinching honesty to the declaration, and determination to pay their debts whenever they could, and to promote trade and industry by every means of encouragement.

In this view I had much hoped that the President would advise Congress to repeal the dishonest Bill of the July Session,² which would have the effect of making the Exchequer Notes receivable for Customs Imposts at their full value, then I thought that with resolutions of Congress forbidding the issue of another Dollar

¹President Houston's message is dated December 1, 1842. (*Journals of the House of Representatives of the Seventh Congress of the Republic of Texas*, 10-28.)—EDITORS OF THE QUARTERLY.

²The bill referred to by Elliot is "An act to regulate the collection of impost duties," approved July 23, 1842. (Gammel, *Laws of Texas*, II, 812.)—EDITORS OF THE QUARTERLY.

until the whole amount in circulation fell within such an amount as would be absorbed by the duties within a period of three Months, and future monthly publicity of the amount issued, and the amount absorbed, He might expect to keep up the value within some reasonable distance of a specie value. I had also hoped to see a recommendation to sweep away the tonnage duty, which was no more than a device to prevent ships from coming to Texas, and to enhance the value of imports to a people that could ill enough afford to pay for them at the minimum price, at which they could be supplied. The tariff too at it's present rate (an average of at least 25 per Cent over the general mass of imports) might be lowered more than 50 per Cent, with great advantage to the revenue, and to the Consumer—And I could not [help] thinking it, would be worthy of his general wise course of policy to advise Congress to declare that it was expedient to lower the tariff to such a point as would serve to pay the expence of noting exports and imports for Statistical purposes and no more, as soon as the people had the common sense to pay their land and direct taxes, so that the Government might be supported in the way best suited to them on well understood interests.

The President required that the Custom duties at their present high rate should be paid in Gold and Silver, but I could not perceive how the Merchants were to get their Gold and Silver. They could only purchase it by bringing in less goods, and He must excuse me for saying (seeing that I was weak of stomach, and could not easily digest the modification of Sawdust, which they call "Corn bread", that is bread made of Indian Corn) that flour, and coffee, and sugar, and clothes, were to the full as useful as Gold and Silver. The Merchants were already obliged to wait nearly two years for the produce returns for the goods they supplied to the Planters, and if those goods was to be charged with 25 per Cent more in the price, which would be at least necessary to cover the cost of the Gold and Silver duty payment, it seemed to me that they would all find a remedy for the mischief, by keeping the whole trade of the Country the wrong side of the Custom Houses.

The President answered this with a form of expression which He often uses—"My dear Commodore as soon as I have hung a

dozen of these Smugglers, we will have no more of it; only let me execute them, Sir, and we shall get our revenues quite steadily." I said that I did not pretend to dispute that hanging might be a very good thing in it's way, but I remarked that a very venerable Sovereign in whose Dominions I had passed several years of my life, and where the Laws were generally respected to the full as energetically as they are disregarded in other places, had tried the experiment of hanging, drawing and quartering for this peccadillo, wholly without effect. I believe He would be disposed to admit on reflection that the history of the whole world had found that Smuggling had always beat various fiscal systems, after immense loss, and great mischief of other kinds to the Governments and people where they had obtained. He shook his head at this, and was not prepared to agree with me—the truth is that General Houston has two sides to his understanding, one very clear indeed, and the other impenetrably dark. Let him speak of men, on public affairs, or the tone and temper of other Governments, and no one can see farther, or more clearly. The moment He turns to finance or fiscal arrangements, you find that he has been groping on the dark side of his mind.

I feel that I should offer you an excuse for troubling you so long upon this topic, but I cannot but think that it is an object of very considerable importance that this Country (situated as it is), should be launched upon sound principles in this respect. With Mexico upon one side, and the United States upon the other, it is much to be wished they should establish their own Commercial footing upon a sound basis.—A subject upon which General Houston's policy and personal feeling is particularly honorable and wise is the treatment of the Indians. He has adverted to it with his usual liberality on this occasion, and I cannot help thinking that it would fortify him in such purpose, and be attended with good general consequences, if Lord Aberdeen would notice that point in any manner that might seem suitable to His Lordship.—The most tremendous crime of these modern times is the treatment of the Indians on this Continent. Robbers and Murderers pronounce that the civilized man cannot live in peace with the Indian, and the whole Christian world accepts the precious falsehood, as one of the undeniable and inscrutable truths of God's way upon Earth. In at least eight cases out of ten, the first perfidy as well as the

first rapine is on the side of the Civilized savage, and then of course, there is nothing for it but to kill these poor wretches, or to be killed by them.

I am cordially for the President's favorite remedy in the case of outrage to Indians. You will judge by the general tone of His Message that we are in a sorry, and very inflamed condition, but they do not appear to be in a much sounder state in Mexico, and sure I am that Texian *means of defence* are more to be depended upon, than Mexican means of *offence*.—But it would be a wise and a great policy to put peace between them, starting this Country upon principles that would gradually detach her from the United States connexion, and bind her to the Countries South West of Her, enduringly—Reflection strengthens me in the persuasion that such a combination is practicable,—and I hope I am not stepping beyond my place in expressing the opinion, that it is a policy recommended by very high considerations.

Free labor, and a steady Government at this point, would make it a station of great interest, on a theatre of great and growing importance. I am almost ashamed to forward you this letter, but with a hard hand at the best, I would add, that it is painful to me . . .¹ much just now, and I write with more difficulty than usual. Requesting your excuse—

And begging you to present my respects to Lord Aberdeen, and Lord Canning.

Charles Elliot.

H. U. Addington, Esqre. etc.

ELLIOT TO ABERDEEN²

No. 18.

Galveston December. 14th. 1842

My Lord,

During my recent visit to Washington I took an opportunity to call Mr. Terrell's attention to the note which I had addressed to this Government on the 26th September upon the subject of the

¹Illegible.

²F. O., Texas, Vol. 4. No. 16, Elliot to Aberdeen, enclosing Houston's Message of December 1, 1842; and No. 17, enclosing copy of letter Terrell to Elliot, October 16, 1842, are omitted.

claims for the "Eliza Russell" and "Little Pen."¹ He requested that the removal of the Government from Houston, and Mr. Jones's and his own absence on other service might excuse the want of reply to that communication, but I was assured both by the President and himself that there was great anxiety to adjust the claim for the "Eliza Russell" and that the destitute condition of the Treasury was the sole obstacle in that respect. Mr. Terrell then shewed me an opinion which he had given as Attorney General upon the claim of the "Little Pen" submitted by Messrs. Lizardi and Cos. Agents, some short time before I arrived in the Country, and the Inclosed is a copy of a note which I have subsequently addressed to him.²

In the shape that the case had assumed I felt it incumbent upon myself to enter into it at length, and to endeavour to explain the grounds upon which it must now be considered and adjusted

I shall continue to press the arrangement of both these claims with the urgency prescribed in Your Lordship's Instructions; but there can be no doubt of the disposition of this Government to settle the first as soon as it is in a situation to do so, and I hope that the exposition I have now submitted may have the effect of removing all difficulty respecting the other.

Charles Elliot.

The Right Honorable.

The Earl of Aberdeen K. T. etc.

ELLIOT TO ADDINGTON³

Private.

Galveston December 16th. 1842

My Dear Sir.

In the situation of affairs here I conjecture that you will always be glad to hear at the latest date that there is no change for the worse—if none for the better. And I will only say upon my own part, that it is no love of long letter writing which has disposed me to trouble you at what I am afraid you may consider an unconscionable length upon the topics of my present correspondence, but

¹See Garrison, *Diplomatic Correspondence of the Republic of Texas*, III, 1022-1023; in *Am. Hist. Assoc. Report*, 1908, II.

²*Ibid.*, III, 1058-1062, Elliot to Terrell, December 13, 1842.

³F. O., Texas, Vol. 4.

on very serious impression that the subject is of much moment, and that the crisis for it's conclusive and advantageous treatment is at hand, and may soon pass away.

Thus impressed I use the freedom to say that it was pleasant to me to find that Lord Aberdeen had declined the proposal of a triple Mediation.¹ In my poor judgment there is no advantage to be derived from any association with the Government of the United States in that matter.

They are ill liked by the Mexicans, and there seems reason to doubt their own earnestness, or sincerity upon the subject of a recognition of Texian independence by Mexico. The N. E. and free States probably believe that the Independence and progress of Texas upon the *present footing with respect to Slavery*, would be the next most inconvenient thing (so far as their weight in the Union is considered) to it's formal annexation. The S. W. States have always frankly desired it's annexation.

The people of Texas are gasping for peace, and the best bidder. I believe that the only safe solution would be a formal offer upon the part of Her Majesty's Government to Texas, to secure the close of this contest upon the basis of It's consenting to place Itself in a position of *real Independence*, by an immediate and thorough organization of It's social, political and Commercial Institutions and policy upon sound, and independent principles; an[d] further offering every reasonable facility to England to negotiate such a loan as would be necessary to accomplish the proposed objects.

So far as I can see there is no choice between this, and the virtual, early, and permanent lapse of Texas within the sphere of United States influence, and policy; and I cannot help adding here, that I do not believe that the Government and people of the United States have just or Moderate purposes with respect to Mexico. To put Texas between them with a steadily constituted

¹Ashbel Smith, on instructions from Anson Jones, had proposed to France in July, 1842, that she join with Great Britain and the United States in urging Mexico to make peace with Texas. Guizot approved the plan and suggested it to Aberdeen, but the latter preferred to have Great Britain act separately, and declined the overture in October, 1842. (Adams, *British Interests and Activities in Texas*, 117-119.) On December 7, 1842, Elliot, in a private letter to Houston, stated Aberdeen's refusal, and transmitted the substance of the correspondence between England and France. (Garrison, *Diplomatic Correspondence of the Republic of Texas*, I, 637, in Am. Hist. Assoc. Report, 1907, II.)

Governt. upon a non Slavery principle, with a considerable Coloured population, perfectly free of political disabilities, and a Commercial policy of the most liberal description is the best barrier that I believe the nature of circumstances offers against consequences and encroachments in my mind *deliberately intended*, and which may be much nearer than they appear to be.

The chance of the permanent re-establishment of Mexican Authority in Texas is gone, but another effort in that sense upon the part of Mexico, in the utterly depressed condition of this Country will possibly throw it back upon the United States, and that is the end which would probably best please the present Cabinet at Washington, and most assuredly the whole of the S. W. part of the Union.

But Texas, differently established would put an end to all combination of that kind, and be a very helpful weight in the preservation of peace, and a just balance of power on this Continent. I cannot help thinking that money lent to put an end to Slavery in a South West direction in America; and to give a place and a voice to the Coloured races, would render as profitable returns as money spent for fortresses and Military works on the Northern frontier of the United States. We should have those Mens hearts with us beyond the third and fourth generation.

Texas would be effectually separated from the United States of the Union, and a liberal Commercial policy would as effectually detach it from the N. E. States infected by a spirit of Commercial hostility to Great Britain, and this last principle efficaciously worked out would soon relax the self injurious fiscal system of Mexico.

Charles Elliot.

To H. U. Addington, Esqr. etc.
P. S.

I have this moment heard from Houston that a small party of our Texian levies have advanced to the Rio Grande, and I can have no doubt that they will do no manner of good there. The President has done what He could to prevent this folly, but it needs other checks there than that, and I think it is safe to prophecy that it will find them. This report has reached us with more solidity than most we have had from that quarter, upon the same

subject, and eventually, it may be entirely false. There is not much truth running about our natural roads in Texas.

ELLIOT TO ADDINGTON¹

Private.

Galveston Decr. 28th. 1842

My Dear Sir,

Since I had the pleasure of writing to you last, we have received President Tyler's Message to the Congress of the United States. I collect from that document that their difficulties with Mexico are in course of adjustment, and by the bye either my solitary life is cheating my imagination, or that Message is a very noticeable instrument, both in point of significancy, and the time of the appearance of such matter. The President closes his paragraph concerning the general relations with European Powers with an observation, which I cannot help thinking might have more frankly found it's place at the head of the succeeding Section of the Message.

It has a tang of Texas and Mexico, and is certainly worthy of attention both for coolness of purpose, and dryness of expression—"Carefully abstaining from all interference in question[s] exclusively referring themselves to the political interests of Europe, we may be permitted to hope an equal exemption from the interference of European Governments in what relates to *the States of the American Continent*."²

Bolting the bran, I presume this means that United States politicians and financiers mislike disturbance on the little Island, forming the Continent of North and South America. But it is possible that this pretension of United States policy may not be equally acceptable to all "the States of the American Continent." There is room to suspect that some of the States of the American Continent have no particular confidence in Washington purposes, and no desire to cast off all other friendship in peace, or alliances in War. Be that as it may, it is pleasant to observe how considerably Mr. Tyler has blended the Civil with the decided in this "Bon Soir" to European influence in this quarter of the globe.

¹F. O., Texas, Vol. 4.

²President Tyler's message to Congress, December 7, 1842. (Richardson, *Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, IV, 197.) Elliot's quotation is slightly inaccurate.

His self permission to hope for "an equal exemption from the interference of European Governments in what relates to the States of the American Continent" is a fine instance of the *Multum in parvo* in comprehensive political discussion.

Washington on the Potomac is the place of places in President Houston's emphatic language "A God's Earth," for great strokes of this kind—Washington on the Brazos has it's promise too, but we are giving and they get. When I read this announcement drumming us all off this Continent, from the Arctic to the Antarctic, I could not but pull back to what had been said some distance up the stream of small print. There we had been instructed "that the question of peace or war between the United States and Great Britain is a question of the deepest interest, not only to themselves, but to the Civilized world, since it is scarcely possible that the War could exist between them without endangering the peace of Christendom"

It seems then that there is no objection to as much of United States influence on the *Continent* of Europe, as may serve to draw one half of it upon our backs in that contingency of deepest interest,—war between the United States and Great Britain; but Great Britain must pretend to no influence on the *Continent* of America.

This is plain American, if not plain English, on the occasion of the earliest possible formal declaration after the publication of the late Treaty,¹ that the Oregon territory is an open question, and

¹Treaty of Washington, signed at Washington, August 9, 1842. *pari passu* with marked approbation of General Cass for volunteering to trip up arrangements at Paris, known to be agreeable to the British Government and Nation.¹ Living I may almost say in the United States, and with my attention constantly fixed upon a subject in which United States feeling and assistance are exer-

¹On December 20, 1841, the Quintuple treaty for the suppression of the African slave trade had been signed at London by England, France, Prussia, Austria, and Russia. The treaty gave to each nation a right to search vessels of the other nations signing the treaty. Lewis Cass, American representative at Paris, protested against this, wrote a pamphlet upon the matter of right of search, and appealed to France with such effect that the French government refused to ratify the treaty. For the treaty, see *British and Foreign State Papers*, XXX, 269.

cising so powerful an effect, I hope to be excused for these reflections

There is no thinking or writing of Texas without adverting to United States politics, and impulses, and I must frankly say that so far as I can judge the late Treaty with Great Britain is generally considered in the United States to be no more than a truce into which it has been convenient for them to enter till our hands are full in other parts of the World, and their own credit and finances have recovered themselves. The Government no doubt has more honest purposes than the general body of the people. As the Government of the United States is the creation of a great majority. In fact, the land, through it's whole length and breadth is infected with the plague of party politics, and electioneering. It is not principles that are a question in that great republic, but the monstrously exaggerated virtues and wisdom of Henry, John, or Thomas, and the still more hideously exaggerated views and folly of Martin, James or Peter. Upon those themes, and for the sake of party success, the Country is in a perpetual ferment, and nothing steady or just can be depended upon at the hands of the Government

Weighing all the circumstances within my reach of judgment, and particularly the undoubted temper of our neighbours East of the Sabine, I certainly do think it is an object of considerable moment to Her Majesty's Government that this Texas question should be firmly and steadily settled, and I lean to the opinion that it is in the power of Her Majesty's Government (so far as Texas is concerned) to effect an eligible arrangement. Monsieur de Cremiel¹ the new French Charge d'Affaires to our Court arrived here a week since. He told me it was generally reported at New Orleans in respectable circles that the British Govnt. had refused to take part in the Mediation proposed by Mr. Ashbell Smith,² and asked if this were so. Finding that He had received no despatches since He left France, and that He was going up to see the President (of Texas) at Washington, probably under mistaken impressions, I begged him to peruse Lord Aberdeen's correspond-

¹Vicomte Jules de Cramayel, French chargé d'affaires in Texas, 1842-1844.

²See note, page 93.

ence with Lord Cowley¹ upon that subject, which would not only explain to him the feelings of Her Majesty's Government, but of his own too; and enable him to judge how little credit was to be attached to New Orleans reports.

Congress is still in Session, or I should say, in confusion, for the Members from Western Texas, angry at the removal of the capital from Austin have seceded. And there is just a quorum, and that is all, without them. In the present disturbed condition of the Country, it seems to me to be wished that they should all go home, as soon as possible. We have no tidings from the force that has advanced to the Rio Grande but no good can come of such folly as that, and it will be matter of surprize if one half of them get back, that is to say, supposing they *do* cross the Rio Grande.

My continued concern for these tedious letters must be the coherent tediousness of the subject, and the belief that you will desire to hear more about it, in it's present posture than you could do, or should do from me, if it were better settled. Requesting you to offer my respects to Lord Aberdeen and Lord Canning.

Charles Elliot.

To H. U. Addington, Esqr. etc.

By the news from Washington this morning, I find amongst other notices of business before Congress. A resolution (in the H. of Representatives) "to instruct the Committee of Foreign relations to enquire into the expediency of annexing the Republic of Texas to the Ud. States."² It is not proposed by one of our great men, and nothing has been done upon it yet: If there be, I shall of course make the Subject a matter of official communication to Lord Aberdeen. I suppose it is only put forward as a feeler.

Charles Elliot

¹Henry Wellesley, Baron Cowley (1773-1847), British ambassador at Paris, 1841-1846. (Stephen, *Dictionary of National Biography*.)

²On December 20th, R. Scurry introduced the resolution referred to by Elliot. (*Journals of the House of Representatives of the Seventh Congress of the Republic of Texas*, 89.)—EDITORS OF THE QUARTERLY.